



Jan Hayman, Marge Kunde, Ann Hutchinson and Carole Gernes in August 2015.

This article appeared in Maplewood Nature Center's *Volunteer Voice* in October, 1989. It was written by former naturalist and volunteer coordinator, Judy Horsnell.

Introducing Marge Kunde

Marge is a lively illustration of the old environmental theory that everything is connected to everything else. Marge walks for her health; she often walked through the Nature Center on her way from her home to McDonald's. One day in 1987, she stopped in to ask if we would like her to pick up trash as she walked. Soon, she was stopping in often.

She has a love of animals that she couldn't hide. "How about taking care of them occasionally?" Next thing you know, Marge is patiently feeding each piece of earthworm to the salamander and giving "Punkin," the box turtle, a warm bath each morning. She nurtures all of the animals, talks to them, and makes sure they get exercise. She is there for them 50 weeks a year, adjusting her hours to comply with programs and holidays. Back to the premise, everything is connected...

Her husband Gene just retired. They had been planning to move to Rochester, Minnesota, in their retirement. Those plans are now changed. "I discovered I have everything right here. I like being a volunteer at the Nature Center and I want to keep coming. The volunteers are just a great group. And of course, the animals—don't forget the animals."

Why Rochester: Well, Marge had once been a patient at the Mayo Clinic and really grew to like Rochester. But now Rochester is just a very nice town with many historic homes and museums to visit for mini-vacations.

Why walk to McDonald's? Back to her love of animals. "The thought of animals giving their life so I could have meat became so bad that I couldn't eat it anymore—I just couldn't digest it. I've been a vegetarian for fifteen years. I see health benefits. I feel better. I eat mostly veggies, fruit and cheese. But I don't preach—I think that this is an individual's decision. So, I walk to McDonald's and have a salad." This thread of connectedness winds back to the Nature Center staff, who often benefit with a nice fresh cup of McDonald's coffee, delivered by Marge.

Who is this thoughtful, sensitive woman who attracts and befriends people? Marge was born in the old St. Joseph's Hospital in St. Paul. There were 7 children in the family. She went to St. John's and Hill Schools and attended St. Joseph's Academy. Her Dad was a big influence on her. "He was a Swede who loved animals and he was a fair and easygoing good-guy."

As a young girl, she was interested in Girl Scouting, gymnastics and track, and soft ball. She spent most summers at Grandpa's farm near Little Falls. There were crops and animals. Marge would ride the plow horses bareback and get into the pigpen, chase the pigs around and play with the little ones.

"I worked at Northern Pacific in a clerical job and filled orders on roller-skates in the Ward's Mail Order Department. I met Gene on a blind date. We liked to go to movies. We have been married for 44 years and have two children and three grandchildren."

Shortly after their marriage they sold their care and bought land. Travelling by bus and carrying an infant son, they would go to Maplewood and work on their house, which they built themselves. It will not surprise you to learn that Marge helped lay the concrete floors and cement blocks of the foundation, or that she hammered, nailed and plastered the walls and helped erect the fireplace.

Marge has fun playing with her four cats, attending Twins games, helping Gene with mechanical work at the airport, and coming to the Nature Center. She was a scout leader and volunteers at her church for special events. She volunteered 500- hours at the Nature Center last year.

"If I could be an animal, I would be a house sparrow. They are happy little animals who seem to enjoy life—everyone else likes some other birds better, but I enjoy watching them,"

Just like Marge—always befriending those who need it most!